

Jesus Was Not A Jew, Either By Religion Or By Ancestry

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Jesus was an Israelite. He was a direct descendant of Levi through Aaron.¹ Levi was a son of Jacob. Jacob was named Israel by God.² Jesus was also a direct descendant of Judah through David. Judah was also a son of Jacob.³ Jacob's sons were the first Israelites. Jesus was specifically an Israelite because he was a direct descendant of two of the sons of Jacob/Israel.⁴

Why then, does everyone say that Jesus was a Jew? Most people think that Jesus was a Jew, but Jesus was an Israelite, not a Jew. Israelites were the ones who were called the chosen people of God.⁵ Edomites, and their descendants, now called Jews, are not the chosen people. The fact that modern day Jews want us to think they are descended from Israelites is one of the greatest intentional lies, or misunderstandings, in all of history.

It would be virtually impossible to find a book written about Jesus that doesn't describe him as a Jew. Are they all calling him a Jew because they think he was a Jew by religion? Are they all calling him a Jew because they think he was a Jew by ancestry? A person can be a Jew by religion while not being a Jew by ancestry, and a person can be a Jew by ancestry while not being a Jew by religion. Just what are the facts concerning the religion and ancestry of Jesus?

First, was Jesus a Jew as far as his religion was concerned? No, his religion was Hebrewism; or, as we now call it, the Religion of the Old Testament. That religion was the religion of the Hebrews and the Israelites, and was based on the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. Stephen S. Wise, a former chief rabbi of the United States, said:

"The return from Babylon [following the Captivity, about 538 B.C.], and the adoption of the Babylonian Talmud, marks the end of Hebrewism, and the beginning of Judaism."⁶

Jesus criticized the Jews, or Pharisees, for establishing Judaism which is based on the Talmud,⁷ and which at the time of Jesus was still called the Tradition of the Elders.⁸

When the people returned from Babylon, about 538 B.C., after the Babylonian Captivity, they brought back a different religion than the one practiced just fifty years earlier. The new religion was the Tradition of the Elders (or Judaism), and that religion was based on the teachings of the rabbis rather than the laws of God.

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"⁹



In this painting by James Tissot, Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees, and he rebuked them and criticized their religion.¹⁰

For many years after the return from the Babylonian Captivity, even at the time of Jesus, the remaining Israelites still went to the Temple and participated in the religious activities there. Those Israelites had nowhere else to go, but they tried to hold on to Hebrewism, the religion of their ancestors, even though that religion had been largely eliminated by the rabbis.

Professor Georg Hermann Schnedermann (1852-1917) of the University of Leipzig, a Lutheran theologian, made his point eloquently when he wrote about the two groups at the time of Jesus with different religions and ethnicities.

He distinguished “between the ‘Israelite’ and ‘Jewish’ elements in the intellectual atmosphere in which Jesus grew up: though Judaism reigned in the schools of the scribes and held the field to outward appearance, yet an ‘Israelite’ strain of piety and conviction prevailed in a certain section of religious society. Those who walked in the green pastures and beside the still waters of this faith of the heart were in touch with the Prophets and understood all that is deepest in the Old Testament.”¹¹

Many of the people hoped that a leader would emerge who would turn back the clock and allow them to have the religion of God that had disappeared.¹² A mission of Jesus was to give back to the Israelites the religion that had been stolen from them. Definitely, Jesus was not a Jew by religion.

Second, was Jesus a Jew by ancestry? Jews were not Israelites as they were not descended from Jacob. They were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob. While both were grandsons of Abraham and sons of Isaac, Jacob was favored by God.¹³ Esau’s descendants were called Edomites,¹⁴ and later they were called Jews since many of them were then living in Judea because the Edomites had been captured by John Hyrcanus and forced to convert to the religion then in place in Judea. Jesus stated in Matthew, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”¹⁵ When Jesus sent his disciples out to spread his message he told them, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”¹⁶ The Jews were not a part of the sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus talked about. Note that it is not the fact that the Jews did not believe in the message of Jesus that made them not of his sheep. Jesus knew that it was because they were not of his sheep that they did not believe in his message.

“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”¹⁷

Therefore, Jesus in his own words gave us proof that the Jews were not of his sheep, the house of Israel. They were not Israelites. Jesus knew that they didn’t have the same religion or ancestry that he had.

Jacob kept his line pure and God rewarded him by making him the father of God’s “chosen people.”¹⁸ Note that the Jews are not the “chosen people” even though they say that they are. Jacob’s brother Esau married out of his own people and God punished him. His descendants moved to the Mount Seir area southeast of the Dead Sea. His descendants were called Edomites.¹⁹ They were the ancestors of the people known today as Jews.²⁰ Later the Edomites moved into the areas vacated by the Israelites during the Captivity. Many years after that when John Hyrcanus, one of the Macabean kings, conquered the Edomites and then offered them full citizenship if they would adopt the religion then in place in Judea, this brought most of the Edomites into Judea and into the religion later known as Judaism.

“As far as authentic history will carry us, the descendants of the Edomites are to be sought for rather amongst the Jews themselves, than amongst any other people”²¹

The Edomite Jews claimed they were from Abraham, which they were, being descended from Esau, a son of Isaac. But a passage in John proves that the Jews were not Israelites since they told Jesus that they had never been in bondage.²² Of course, the Israelites had been held as slaves in Egypt.²³ Those were Edomite Jews to whom Jesus was speaking.

The Jews at the time of Jesus were not a part of any tribe of Israel, including the Tribe of Judah. They were a mixture of Babylonians, Cannanites, Hittites, but mainly Edomites. The Jews of today are the descendants of those people.²⁴ Jesus was not a Jew but was actually an Israelite, as he was descended from Levi through Aaron and Zadok.²⁵ He was also an Israelite because he was descended from Judah through David.²⁶ Both Levi and Judah were sons of Jacob who was renamed Israel by God. During his ministry Jesus had many battles with the Pharisees who were Edomite Jews, and not Israelites.²⁷ The Pharisees were not respected by Jesus because they enforced the Tradition of the Elders, later known as Judaism, which Jesus did not accept.²⁸ Also, Jesus did not respect them because he knew that they were Edomite Jews and not Israelites.

Jesus was of the religion of Hebrewism; or, as we call it today, the Religion of the Old Testament, and he was an Israelite of the Tribes of Levi and Judah. So, contrary to what is said or written about Jesus being a Jew, he was not a Jew either by religion or by ancestry.²⁹

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